PRELACIE IS MISERIE:

OR,

THE SVPPRESSING OF PRELATICALL GOVERMENT and eſtabliſhing of Provintiall, and nationall Sinods, is a hopefull meanes to make a flouriſhing Church, and happie Kingdome.

LAN · BIBLIOTH

Imprinted for a good intent,
After Chriſmas before Lent:
1641.

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Prelaticall Goverment is the Churches Ruine and Misery.

The Argument. *The Argument.*

THat Goverment whereby Herisies, Prophanines, Idolatry, and Superstitions, hath great opprotunitie to creepe into the Church, is the Ruine and Misery of any Church, Nation, or Kingdome: But Prelaticall Goverment gives great opportunity for Herisies, Prophannesse, Idolatry, and superstition to creepe into the Church; therefore Prelaticall goverment is the Churches Ruine and Misery. *Conclusion.*

First, to prove that that Goverment whereby herisies, prophannesse, Idolatrie, & superstition, hath great opportunity to creepe into the

Church is the Ruine and Misery of the Church, Nation, or Kingdome; The Prophet *Isay* saith The Ancient and Honorable man, he is the head and the Prophet that teacheth lies, hee is the taile: for the leaders of the people cause them to erre, and they that are led by them are devoured, *Isay* 9. 15, 16. And *Solomon* saith, that Iustice exalteth a Nation, but sinne is a shame to to the people, *Prov.* 14. 34. And the Prophet *Hosea* saith, Heare the word of the Lord ye children of *Israel*, for the Lord hath a controversie with the Inhabitants of the land, because there is no Truth, nor Mercy, nor knowledge of God in the Land; by swearing, and lying, &c. *Hosea* 4. 2. Therefore (saith the Lord) shalt thou fall in the day, and the Prophet shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thee, *verse* 5. Therefore saith *Constantine* (writing to the *Nicomedians*) if saith he, there bee any Bishop which is inflamed to continue Herisies, his presumption shall presently be corrected.

Theodorus in his first book, Chap. 19.

Secondly, to prove that Prelaticall goverment gives so great an opportunity for Herisies, Prophannesse, Idolatry, and Superstitions to creepe into Church, I lay downe these two grounds. First in regard of the Prelates themselves. Secondly, in regard of the Church.

1. In regard of themselves, whose calling is but an usurpation, and such as is no waies warrantable nor lawfull, but contrary both to the lawes of God, the patterne of the Apostles, the Primative Churches, and also the custome of our latter reformed Churches. It

It is an unbecomming thing for a Minister to be lifted up into places of worldly Honours and dignities, whose office it is in all humility to Preach the Gospel of Christ, and to set the Kingdome of Heaven as a marke before him, and not like those Lordly Bishops who whine after Lordships, and Earldomes, and Kingdomes, here on earth; which our Saviour Iesus Christ forbiddeth, marke Saint *Paul* setts forth the true approved Ministers of God not to bee such as lift themselves up as Lords; but such as like the faithfull servants and Ministers of Christ, are faithfull Preachers and disposers of his holy word, 1 *Cor.* 4. 1. 2. And let our Lordly Bishops pleade for Episcopacie as much as they will. S. *Gregory* saith plainey, that hee who shall have a guard of Priests to attend upon him is Antichrist. *In his 4. 38. chap.*

2. In regard of the Church, our Lordly Bishops being so willing to bee taken from their calling of teaching, & instructing of their flocks; upon whose charge the cure of their soules doth lie: which made Saint *Paul* to call to minde that woe which lieth on those Ministers who forbeare to Preach the Gospel, no he will not forbeare to Preach in regard of that necessity which is layd upon them; not looking, and labouring for the things which are seene, but for the things which are not seene, 2 *Cor.* 14. 18. What can wee expect then, but that our Prelates will bee ready to entertaine any Heresie, prophannesse, idolatrie, or superstition, so they be established in their usur-

pod Seas, or addeth profit to their estates and Earledomes: of whom *Cornelius Britiscus* saith, would God (saith he) they would not goe wholly with generall consent from religion to superstition; from Faith to Infidility, from God to perjury, for they all sought their owne, and not for the things which pertaine to Iesus Christ.

In the Chap. of Trident.

Reason.

The Reason which Prelaticall, or Lordly government of the Bishops, is the ruine and misery of the Church, is plaine; because by their government Heresies, Prophannesse, Idolatry, and Superstition hath great meanes and opportunity to creepe into the Church, and that I shall make plaine to be true, as may appeare by the woefull experience of the Churches under them.

1. If the Bishop himselfe of any Diocesse bee infected with any Heresie, Prophannesse, Idolatry, or Superstition, to binde the consciences of men to mens traditions, to give liberty to prophane the holy Sabboth: bee given to bowings and superstitious ceremonies, to have Alters and Images in the Church, &c. What shall we think will bee his dealing with those Churches within his Diocesse? The holy people of the Lord see those things, and are grieved to see them, but they know not what course to take to reforme them.

2. If they complaine at the Visitation, they doe but like birds, runne among limetwiggs: and in stead of reforming the Church, hamper themselves into troubles.

3. Secondly, if they complaine to the Ministry of the Parish, either hee is one that will bee

ready

ready to defend it, or if hee be an honest Minister that would gladly see these things reformed: yet he dares not speake for feare of suspention; or if he doe complaine, he is silenced, if not suspended *Ipso facto*; yea it may be, and loose his eares for his labour too.

3. If they complaine to the Magestrate, hee dares not meddle with it to goe about any reformation, because hee will say it belongs to the Church: Oh what a misery is this for any Church to be under such goverment where shee is constrained thus to bewaile her woefull miserie and cannot be reformed.

II. Those Ministers who are under any Bishops Diocesse, have their mouthes so stopped by their Lordly Prelate; that they dare not reprove any Heresie, Idolatry, or wickednesse, which the Bishop doth either practise in himselfe, or favour in others.

III. If any Heresie bee in the Church, any Drunkard, Horemonger, or Papist that can but get into the Bishops favour, either by bribes or friends, or any other way: then may such prophane persons still abide, and goe on from time to time in their filthinesse without controulement: and thus the corrupting of one Lordly Prelate is the misery of all the other Churches under him.

Can not (not onely Lordly Bishops amongst the *Iewes*, and in *Germany*, *Cullen*, *Mentz*, with many others, but also) those of our owne Nation bee a testimony herein, under whose tiranni-

call

call Hierarchical goverment many faithful painefull Ministers have beene silenced, and punished, and some imprisoned, some suspended, others dyed in Prison, others having their members taken from them, &c. But Drunkards, Hereticks, prophaners of Gods holy Sabboth; Idolaters, Adulterers, and the like such as these: not so much as once called to any accompt for these things? no, the puritanicall Priests as they call them, they are the men they would roote out, that so their kingdome of darkenesse might florish; But the Lord saith by the Prophet *Hosea*, O ye Priests heare this (saith the Lord) and harken, yea house of Israel, and give yeeare O house of the King, for Judgement is towards you, becausse you have beene a snare on *Mispah*, and a net spread upon *Tabor*, *Hosea* 5. 1. and such snares have the Prelates laide for the people of God; these are they saith Saint *Austin* who with severall burthens, doe so oppresse our Religion, (which God of his mercy would have to be free under few and manifest Sacraments of Divine Service) in so much that the state of the *Iewes* is more tollerable, for their burdens were under the law of God, but these burthens are under the devises and presumptions of men.

In his 119. Booke.

Object. You will say it may bee? how shall the Church then be governed? shall the Church be without goverment?

Answ. No, the Church of God hath a governour, Jesus Christ the head of the Church? and under Christ; wee have our gratious King, who

who is governour of all persons, and causes both Ecclesiasticall, and civill next under Christ, within these his Dominions.

Object. But what meanes may then be used for the discoverie of Heresies, and the rooting out of Idolatrie out of the Church: shall every Minister teach freely any thing, whatsoever entreth into his fancy, and shall their be no Church goverment from the Clargie at all?

Answ. There is better meanes then to have it governed by Prelates, and that according both to the Primative Churchs, and also to the best approved late reformed Churches.

I. For every flocke there may bee chosen a Presbiter, as the truth is, the office of a Bishop is no more; this Presbiter or Bishop set over only one perticular flocke; being chosen with an unanimous consent of the people, after proofe being made of him; and hee placed there takes to himselfe the charge of the cure of those soules, and any Heresie, prophannesse, or Idolatry, or any such like evills which he seeth to offer to creepe into the Church, hee may roote it out and suppresse it; and not be feared by any one perticular Prelate ruling Lordly over him, but sincerely to serve the Lord Christ.

II. Least some corruption should bee in the Presbitor, so that these evills are passed by, and are not reformed, there may be a Provintiall Synod, to reforme what the Presbitor either could not, or would not; unto which Synod may e-

very Presbiter give an accompt conferning all matters committed to his chare; and that there they may be further treated on and examined amongst them altogether.

III. There may bee a Nationall Synod also kept at severall times, as shall bee thought meete for the publicke unitie of the Church, and for the reforming of those evills and enconveniences which the Presbiter or Provintiall Synod shall escape.

Let any man now consider if it bee not more happie for the Church to have Sinods, then to be ruled by Prelates? and what happinesse may come by the one, and what evill by the other.

Many are the abuses in the Prelates goverment.

1. They would seclude the Nobles, the Gentry, and both the Houses of Parliament from having any right to meddle in Church matters.

2. They Lordly exalt themselves above other Ministers, contrary to the command of Christ, and the Doctrine of the Apostles.

3. Their Decrees tend to their owne ends, and not to Gods Glory.

4. They have corrupted Courts.

5. They neglect their Studies, and Preaching, to follow matters of State.

6. They labour to compell men to sweare rash and unlawfull oathes.

7. They live in the pompe and glory of the world.

8. They labour to bring in Popish Seremonies into the Church.

9. They

9. They make a gaine of such things, as even by their usurped Hierarchy, they ought not to take money for; with many other abuses too tedious to recon up in so short a volume: all which might by Synods be prevented, there being no Lordly Bishops, save onely the Presbitors themselves, being all equall.

Calvin saith, that a Priest a and Bishop are all one; as saith Saint *Hierom*. Churches were before governed by common Councells of Elders, afterwards the care was committed to one man appointed by men; so that the Bishops are above the Priests, rather by custome then by the truth of the Lords disposing, and they ought to governe the Church saith he in common together: this is the true and ancient custome of the Primative Church, and the chusing of a Bishop was no waies entended at the first for any Lordly Hierarchy as the Prelates now use it; whose pompe is growne to so great an height. *On Epist. to Titus.* *In his instiu.*

An example of their pride wee have in that Pope who set the Painter at worke in his gallery to draw the pictures of *Peter* and *Paul*, who having painted their faces blushing red, the Pope comming in to see his worke, and asking him if *Peter* and *Paul* had such red faces, because hee had so painted them; no quoth he, but if they were here now, and did behold what a glorious rich and magnificent successor they have, they would blush as red as now you see these Pictures doe, and his holinesse was very well pleased with the

the Painters conceit, to ſee himſelfe a brave manr man then ever poore *Peter* and *Paul* were, whoſe ſucceſſor he boaſts himſelfe to be, for what elſe but a ſweet fable doth the Pope make of the Goſpel as himſelfe ſaid, and ſurely wee cannot thinke that Prelates who are the limbes of this great beaſts, are of another ſpirit then Athieſti-call, ſuch as the head himſelfe is of, and which he hath detived to his members.

FINIS.